

Aligning Cultural Hotspot, Live Arts Mentor and Youth Cultural Incubators Stabilization Initiative Programs to the Community Grants Policy

Date: September 11, 2023

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: General Manager, Economic Development and Culture

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report responds to direction from City Council to align three Economic Development and Culture (EDC) initiatives with the City's Community Grants Policy: Cultural Hotspot, Live Arts Mentor (LAM) and the Youth Cultural Incubators Stabilization Initiative (YCISI). Along with other EDC programs and initiatives, such as funding to Local Arts Service Organizations (LASOs), these initiatives run concurrently and operate collectively to provide critical arts-focused resources for some of the city's most vulnerable, equity-deserving arts and culture organizations, collectives and artists to advance cultural development and engagement in communities outside the downtown core, while supporting the next generation of arts leaders and organizations. They are aligned with the City of Toronto priority to advance people and neighbourhoods and with EDC's 2022-2023 strategic direction to grow and promote Toronto's cultural vibrancy.

The Cultural Hotspot program, Live Arts Mentor and Youth Cultural Incubators Stabilization Initiative are recognized as important initiatives with demonstrated impacts through robust and rigorous external program evaluation and internal review processes. Since its inception in 2014, the Cultural Hotspot program has been strategically deployed to spotlight areas of cultural heritage significance, such as Little Jamaica. To date, it has successfully supported 269 projects and highlighted communities in Scarborough, North York, East York, Etobicoke, and other areas. Live Arts Mentor, in turn, has helped build the capacity of small and mid-sized arts organizations, supporting 22 mentorships to local arts organizations, including Stolen from Africa and Tangled Arts + Disability. The Youth Cultural Incubators Stabilization Initiative, finally, has supported youth-led and youth-serving organizations including The Remix Project, Nia Centre for the Arts, Manifesto, and RISE.

The proposed changes in this staff report are part of EDC's grant reform, which started in 2019 – when the City of Toronto Community Grants Policy came into effect – and aims to improve accessibility, transparency and accountability of all EDC grants.

Through this report, EDC is seeking recognition of these initiatives as grant programs with specific streams and transparent processes, and the required divisional discretion to review applications, allocate funds and enter into funding agreements, in compliance with the Community Grants Policy. If adopted, changes will allow for continued supports through distinct grant programs with a clear application process to different streams within existing budget allocation, increasing transparency and accountability of City funding to local arts and culture organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Economic Development and Culture recommends that:

1. City Council direct the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to formally establish the Cultural Hotspot as a grant program with four funding streams: Signature, SPARK, Ignite Ideation and Live Arts Mentor, in accordance with the City's Community Grants Policy.
2. City Council authorize the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to allocate, approve, and disburse one-time, and multi-year grants to not-for-profit organizations through the Cultural Hotspot Program, with funding allocation to be subject to the necessary budget processes and in accordance with the City's Community Grants Policy.
3. City Council authorize the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to negotiate, enter into and execute single and multi-year contribution agreements with not-for-profit organizations funded through the Cultural Hotspot program, with funding recipients and grant amounts to be determined annually by the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, within the budget allocation for the program, and on such content, terms and conditions deemed necessary by the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor
4. City Council direct the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to formally establish the Youth Cultural Incubators Stabilization Initiative as a multi-year grant program with two funding streams: Mentor and Mentee, in accordance with the City's Community Grants Policy.
5. City Council authorize the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to allocate, approve, and disburse one-time and multi-year grants to not-for-profit organizations through the Youth Cultural Incubators Stabilization Initiative program, with funding allocation to be subject to the necessary budget processes and in accordance with the City's Community Grants Policy.
6. City Council authorize the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to negotiate, enter into and execute one-time and multi-year contribution agreements with not-for-profit organizations funded through the Youth Cultural Incubators Stabilization Initiative program, with funding recipients and grant amounts to be determined annually by the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, within the budget allocation for the program, and on such content, terms and conditions deemed

necessary by the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no additional funding requirements associated with the two grant programs, as outlined below. Funds for grants that would be provided under the proposed Cultural Hotspot and Youth Cultural Incubators Stabilization Initiative programs are already included as part of the 2023 Council Approved Operating Budget for Economic Development and Culture.

Grant Program	Funding Streams	Funding Allocated
Cultural Hotspot	Signature, SPARK, Ignite Ideation & Live Arts Mentor	\$320,000/year * <i>*Note: Amount of funding designated to each stream will vary year-to-year based on applications and demand.</i>
Youth Cultural Incubators Stabilization Initiative	Mentor & Mentee	\$600,000/year

Of the total \$600,000 approved by Council to support YCISI, \$10,500 will be allocated annually to the administration of the program to support cohort learning and professional development opportunities, like facilitated workshop sessions and presentations on topics that the cohort identifies.

Future financial impacts arising from the proposed two grant programs, if any, will be accommodated by identifying alternative funding source, offsetting reductions or reallocations within the Approved Operating Budget of the Economic Development and Culture Division.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the information as presented in the Financial Impact section.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on May 10, 2023, City Council approved the 2023 grant allocation to the six Local Arts Service Organizations (LASO).

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.EC3.11>

At its meeting on February 15, 2023, City Council approved the 2023 Operating Budget, including amendments to approve \$0.9 million in funding to support established youth culture organizations across the City to improve cultural, social and economic opportunities for youth.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.MPB4.1>

At its meeting on February 7, 2023, City Council directed the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to align the three programs currently called the Cultural Hotspot, Youth Cultural Incubators Stabilization Initiative, and Live Arts Mentor programs, with the City's Community Grants Policy, and report back to the Economic and Community Development Committee by the third quarter of 2023.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.EC1.4>

At its meeting of July 16, 17, 18, 2019, City Council adopted the Toronto Grants Policy to provide a transparent process for the issuance of community grants by the City.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.EC6.19>

At its meeting on February 20, 2019, Budget Committee approved an increase to the Economic Development and Culture's 2019 Staff Recommended Operating Budget, with part of it dedicated to the Youth Arts Incubation Program

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2019.BU4.4>

At its meeting on May 20, 2015, the Economic Development Committee received a staff report outlining the success of the Cultural Hotspot Program.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.ED4.6>

At its meeting on May 17, 18 and 19, 2011, City Council adopted the report Culture on Creative Capital Gains: An Action Plan for Toronto which laid out a strategic vision for supporting the arts and culture sectors in the City of Toronto.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2011.ED3.3>

COMMENTS

In alignment with the City's strategic priority to invest in people and neighbourhoods, EDC grants support and enhance the business sectors and the cultural fabric of Toronto, helping make it a city that celebrates diversity. The three initiatives addressed in this staff report, alongside the funding for the LASOs, are part of these efforts:

Cultural Hotspot Program

The Cultural Hotspot program shines a spotlight on arts and culture in the city's outside-the-core communities. The program was developed as a result of a recommendation in the Council-approved Creative Capital Gains (CCG) strategy in 2011. CCG stated that the City should develop a rotating "Cultural Hotspot of the year" program to celebrate and advance cultural activity in outside-the-core, underserved neighbourhoods.

In recognizing the historically disproportionate investments in cultural organizations outside the downtown core, one of the key objectives of the Cultural Hotspot program is

to address funding inequities and to provide capacity-building support to arts organization in outside-the-core communities, complementing the work of the six Local Arts Service Organizations (LASOs). Since its inception in 2014, over \$2.3M has been distributed to over 260 arts and community organizations to deliver programs, projects and events including arts workshops, murals, local festivals and performances in designated neighbourhoods that are free-of-charge, also providing youth employment and mentorship opportunities. Through these projects, more than 1,200 youth have been mentored and employed.

In the past, Cultural Hotspot has been strategically deployed in different communities, including in Scarborough, North York, East York/East End, Etobicoke and York, in service of City priorities. In 2021, the program shifted to a hyperlocal model, supporting key City initiatives like the Little Jamaica Cultural District Plan and the Jane Finch Initiative, in an effort to align the program's resources with underserved areas undergoing major change. This program continues to go through external and internal review processes, adapting to be responsive to the needs and priorities of artists and communities.

There are currently three funding streams: Signature, SPARK and Ignite Ideation Fund, with funding amounts for the three streams ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000:

- *Signature*: Applicants from the Signature funding stream are established organizations with a proven track record of delivering mid to large-sized community-based arts and cultural projects. Youth employment via job placements and/or paid mentorships is a mandatory component of each Signature Project. Between 5-8 Signature Projects are supported each year with funding allocated to each applicant of up to \$22,000, including up to \$2,000 earmarked to make projects more accessible.
- *SPARK*: The SPARK Project funding stream supports emerging and established equity-deserving artists and arts organizations. It provides up to \$9,000 per project with up to 15 projects supported each year. This includes up to \$1,500 per project earmarked to support youth workforce development opportunities either through employment or paid mentorships.
- *Ignite Ideation Fund*: The Ignite Ideation Fund invites artists and arts organizations to plan, research, and test out new, creative community arts project ideas, gain skills and knowledge, and build capacity. Applicants may apply for \$2,500 to \$5,000 per proposal to support exploratory, concept development and capacity-building activities.

See Attachment 1, 2 and 3 for the project calls for these three funding streams.

The application process involves organizations completing an online application through an open grant call. Information sessions are held in each Cultural Hotspot community with staff providing one-on-one feedback to applicants. Applications are then reviewed and assessed against the funding criteria and budget by City staff and, as of 2023, a peer advisory panel and/or community agency partner to provide funding allocation recommendations, with funding prioritizing organizations run by and/or serving equity-

deserving populations. Once funding recommendations are made, organizations sign a funding agreement and submit a final report upon project completion, including a budget and performance indicators.

Live Arts Mentor (LAM)

It is recommended that LAM be included as a fourth funding stream of Cultural Hotspot.

LAM is a small grant program that aims to build capacity for the next generation of arts leaders and organizations. It utilizes a mentorship model and pairs small and mid-sized arts organizations with more established organizations for a year-long mentorship, while providing flexible funding to implement purpose-driven, stabilizing and growth-oriented activities and initiatives. Specifically, the organizational mentorship plans are co-developed by the mentor and the mentee and are focused on a range of activities such as grant writing, fundraising, board/staff development, evaluation and strategic planning.

Since its inception in 2013, LAM has supported 22 mentorships with over \$300,000 in funds distributed to arts organizations such as RISE, Tangled Arts + Disability, Freedom Fridayz, Next Generation Arts, Stolen from Africa, and Flaunt It, enabling emerging organizations to build capacity while encouraging collaboration and support amongst arts organizations and leaders. Under its current structure, mentor and mentee organizations receive \$10,000 when they participate in the program. The application process involves organizations completing an application, which is then reviewed by City staff. Grantees are also responsible for providing an interim project update and a final report including a budget.

Given that LAM has a small budget between \$20,000 and \$60,000 annually, it is recommended to continue this program under the umbrella of the Cultural Hotspot program, and to prioritize its funding to build capacity and sustainability for arts organizations in the outside-the-core neighbourhoods that the Cultural Hotspot serves.

Youth Cultural Incubators Stabilization Initiative (YCISI)

As a response to the surge of gun and gang-related violent incidents in the summer of 2005 - often referred to as the "Summer of the Gun" in Toronto, community-based arts and cultural programs were looked to as part of the solution to engage with youth. The resulting influx of youth-specific funding, including those from the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Youth Challenge Fund, ArtReach Toronto and those from other public and private funders encouraged the emergence of a generation of youth-led, youth serving community-arts organizations.

However, as the funders' priorities shifted, many of the previously funded youth-based organizations found themselves struggling to remain viable. With a Council-approved budget of \$300,000, YCISI was piloted in 2019 to fill a critical funding gap for the youth-based community arts organizations and offered cohort learning opportunities with a focus on strategic planning, fundraising, board development, evaluation and other capacity building activities to enhance their growth and long-term sustainability.

The first cohort of YCISI-funded organizations were identified through a report developed by a City-commissioned external consultant, EPIC Leadership Support Inc., which called for strategic investment in long-standing youth-focused organizations that have not received sustained investment. Six organizations participated in the first cohort: HXOUSE, Nia Centre for the Arts, Manifesto, RISE, The Remix Project and Unity Charity..

Youth-led, youth serving arts organizations are critical to the city's youth arts ecosystem as they are a key driver for the development of the diverse creative talent that defines the city globally. In 2023, City Council approved an additional \$300,000 to support this program for a total funding portfolio of \$600,000. In Q3 2023, EDC's Arts and Culture Services launched a call for applications to the program, which will support mentor and mentee organizations as a way of developing operational capacity and sustainability via peer-to-peer learning, while nurturing the city's youth arts sector.

The YCISI Program Guideline can be found in Attachment 4.

Aligning with the Community Grants Policy

While the Cultural Hotspot program, in its current form, is in compliance with the Community Grants Policy, grant payments have been made on an ad-hoc basis, funded by EDC's cultural outreach budget. It is recommended that the Cultural Hotspot program be recognized as an annual grant program as a means of reducing ad-hoc payments. Though the Cultural Hotspot program was created as a response to a recommendation in the Creative Capital Gains report, Council authority has not previously been sought to allocate funds and enter into agreements with arts and community organizations to support this program. Additionally, including LAM as one of its four funding streams can provide small and mid-sized organizations located in outside-the-core communities with a continuum of support and sustainable opportunities that focuses on their learning trajectories and organizational capacity.

This approach will also enable the Cultural Hotspot program to expand its reach and increase the program's transparency and accountability while assuring a flexible funding framework that is responsive to the evolving needs of diverse Toronto arts organizations seeking equity and opportunities to gain capacity-building support, new learning and sector advancement. As the Cultural Hotspot moves to different communities in Toronto, City staff will continue to engage local community members as part of a peer advisory panel to provide recommendation on funding allocation each year.

YCISI is at a critical point - youth-led and youth serving organizations need support to continue to grow and flourish. Flexible funding focused on capacity-building and sustainability will enable this generation of arts organizations to continue to serve the city's youth, and make demonstrated impact in equity-deserving neighbourhoods through engaging programming that provides critical pathways for youth employment, mentorship and engagement in arts and culture.

In order to build on the work and leverage learning from the first cohort, the six funded organizations of the first cohort participated in a series of intensive workshops with Method Collective, a City-commissioned third-party consultant, to provide input and

identify gaps and opportunities in the youth arts sector. The resulting evaluation report, [Shifting from Resiliency to Sustainability](#), provided several recommendations for the participating organizations and the City. A key recommendation for the City was to provide organizations with flexible funding based on their unique needs. The recently updated YCISI will accomplish this by bringing emerging and established organizations together to co-develop a mentorship framework that will span over three years. Council's endorsement of YCISI as a grant program will reduce ad-hoc grant payments and allow the City to respond to the unique needs of the youth arts sector via a more structured funding mechanism, ultimately fostering a robust youth arts ecosystem focused on collaboration and resource sharing.

Conclusion

The Cultural Hotspot program and YCISI will continue to be refined through regular monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure that they will meet the needs of artists and local arts organizations and support access to arts and cultural opportunities by and for Indigenous, Black and equity-seeking communities in response to Toronto's changing economic, social and cultural contexts.

The focus of Cultural Hotspot and YCISI is on underserved areas, youth and capacity-building. The recognition of the grants programs and their alignment to the Community Grants Policy will be critical to champion Toronto's diversity, cultural vibrancy and liveability, while ensuring the municipal grant applications and assessment processes are more efficient, accessible and transparent.

Finally, EDC is currently developing an Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector as well as a Divisional Strategy for the next five years, which will include robust community and stakeholder consultations and learnings from best practices from other jurisdictions. These plans and the feedback from community will further guide these programs into the future, ensuring that they continue to be relevant, responsive and impactful.

CONTACT

Julie Frost, Manager, Arts Services, Economic Development and Culture, 416-338-1263

SIGNATURE

Patrick Tobin
General Manager, Economic Development and Culture

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Cultural Hotspot 2023 Signature Project Call

Attachment 2 - Cultural Hotspot 2023 SPARK Project Call
Attachment 3 - Ignite Ideation Fund Call for Applications
Attachment 4 - Youth Cultural Incubators Stabilization Initiative Program Guidelines -
2023